

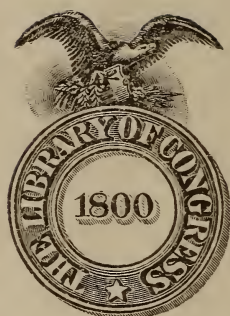
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BEING A LETTER ADDRESSED BY
F.A.
CAPTAIN MAXSE, R.N., TO THE "MORNING POST"
UPON THE SUBJECT
OF OUR AMERICAN ATTITUDE.

[Reprinted for further circulation.]

LONDON:
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PRO PATRI^A.

To the Editor of the "Morning Post."

SIR,—Our present attitude towards America involves so important a crisis that I trust you will allow me, through your columns, to invoke public attention to its gravity, and to a re-consideration of the apathetic policy we now so complacently watch. In doing this, a slight prelude may be necessary upon our relations in the Old World. If my views seem presumptuous, their motive, at least, entitles them to an indulgent hearing.

The watchword of England among nations is "peace." The keen, ardent pulse of our growth and our prime has fallen to the milder throb of quiescence and passivity. Looking upon Europe as our parish, we still mingle—and garrulously—amid the affairs of our neighbours; not without influence, for here we have lived the long national career that makes us respected. One nation, the traditional foe of our youth, has perhaps alone the power to summon the old active wrath that made us great. Sensitive only to her, jealous yet of her power, prompt to thwart by word, and by no means averse to weapon, we still front France with implacable distrust, and with smouldering enmity. A man marvellously beyond his epoch has persistently ignored this, and preserved peace between the two nations, in spite of insult, vilification, and every provocative of war. Through panic, through contumely, through every moral aggression, Louis Napoleon has yet forborne to resent, and has now by dint of imperturbable amity, half-disarmed our jealousy, and materially calmed our rivalry. But any important action of France in Europe would swiftly arouse the deadly instinct, and we would with collective judgment cheerfully accept a war to restrain French ascendancy, or preserve what we know as Balance of Power. Save and except this, we repose in passivity, abjure conquest, surrender possessions, and shrink from all responsibility involving a consequence. We will be

still at all price, have peace at any sacrifice, so long as that sacrifice be not made to France. The last volunteer would quit the shores of England rather than cede Heligoland to this power, but Canada we would present to the Americans. On the one hand, we scout the man who exclaims, "Perish Savoy!" are horrified at the occupation of Rome; on the other hand, we counsel the decease of Hungary, Servia, and Montenegro, and are placidly resigned to that of Poland and Venice. We enact the *rôle* of a great power solely among the lesser and weaker nations, and modify our tone in precise proportion to the expediency. Our war with Russia forms no contradiction to this rule. We temporised and we drifted. There is already a large party, headed by a fanatical historian, to deplore its impolicy. The part we have played during recent foreign junctures has afforded a sufficiently ignominious spectacle. Not daring to initiate a decisive policy ourselves, we have either bickered with that of France, or, emboldened to share it, have strictly confined our advance to the stage exempt from result. There is a worse phase, wherein England is content to slink behind France with the policy she herself dreads to avow or enact. It has become quite common now to hear Englishmen calm their uneasiness upon some threatening foreign event by declaring that "the Emperor will not permit this." In Mexico we are to be found covertly applauding the very action we in public denounced.

Such, sir, is the tendency of the day, inaugurated by no sudden volition, directed by no special clique, but steadily evinced by the greater portion of the public. Accompanying this strange abdication of rank, in this sublime divestment of empire, there is no thought of heritage from our fathers, or of forfeited trust to our children. We of the day loathe war, and contemplate—Belgium. Surely this picture of a great nation flying her own greatness marks some strange turning-point in her career, and would seem to herald an insignificant future. The vitality hungering for conquest gone, may be well considered to indicate maturity; but when the current of life refuses to warm the whole frame, and resolves sluggishly to the heart, there is ground for anticipating danger to the entire national fabric.

This dismemberment of empire is, however remote, by the side of the imminent subject I seek to address you on. There are signs and instincts of a coming time that will swiftly carry this question out of the hands of closet patriots and local politicians. I merely remark it as a feature sadly characteristic of the prevalent torpor and renunciatory spirit.

What England does in Europe, or what visions the teacher may utter from academical groves of Oxford, become empty and frivolous compared with the irreparable and prodigious results impending from our attitude in America. Even the French Revolution, with its mighty surge and conflict of problems, presented England with no question equal to the single one now put amid reverberating battle—Dominion or Equality. A question not merely concerning those who with their life's blood are defending this last sacred cause, but a challenge equally flung, and with an import not less vital, to the nations watching around, and especially to her who, with folded arms and numbed action, stands, than all, more scrupulously aside. The battle being fought, carries with it not only dominion in America, but dominion in the world—not only restoration of the Republic, but dictatorship of democracy—not only extermination of the South, but prospective subjugation of other peoples, and deadly assault of England.

The war of the Southern Confederacy I unhesitatingly assert to be the war of England; and believe our prompt recognition of this Power to be no mere question of expediency, but to be one of *national necessity*. I say this with no pretence to political foresight, but with strong faith in national instinct. The instinct of America to war with England amounts almost to a mission; so it has been from the nation's birth. We have repayed this with an amount of forbearance and submission not far removed from an instinct of fear. Apart, however, from natural tendency, I would ask upon what ground the foreign policy of England, as applied in the Old World, finds itself reversed in the New? In Europe, our system of policy is one avowedly jealous; in America, it is regulated upon principles of the highest moderation—alike generous and meek. Take the present American contest. It is said it would be unfair to avail ourselves of the disaster of a nation to promote English interests. This is what is "said," but no doubt Federal menace has much to do with the view; yet the plea for passivity simply stultifies the whole of our past history; the very A B C of English diplomacy is "equilibrium of power;" and this in Europe has operated in a manner hitherto impassive and relentless. The cry of nationality, the protest of civilisation, the impulse of the age, even the project of science,* sink to the leaden behest of England—leaden, by

* I allude to our obstruction to the Suez canal.

the abandonment of outline for the pursuit of detail, by narrowness of application, by obsolete rivalry.

In a moderate sense there can be no more valuable doctrine to mankind than that of equality among nations ; yet, while perniciously straining this desideratum in Europe, we refuse to apply it in America, though confessing the inestimable benefit such application would be to the world at large, and to the combatants concerned. The magnanimity is surely suspicious that declines to approach a disaster where interruption is a boon. Some other motive must be sought. A large class deprecate all action as being probable to excite imputation of this. But I would inquire, first, whether England's conduct could possibly be attributed to worse motives than those now accredited ; and, secondly, whether a fear of this result, inevitable under all circumstances, can excuse a great nation for evading an obligation of position and an imperative self-duty. No, sir, these are no motives ; they are but the pretexts for indulging the modern mood of inertia and abjuration of power. The grand old English ship with dumb ports drifts through political seas under no higher guidance than an abhorrence of war combined with a fatal recourse to the expediency of the moment. Postponing the present cloud, she floats blindfold towards the very heart of the future storm. Rejecting a powerful ally upon the mere score of tradition, she remains insensible to the new and far more perilous foe, and determines isolation in the face of whatsoever threatening coalition. *Punch* has accurately, though unwittingly, caricatured the elusive course that marks our present career. The artist and public generally perceived in the sketch of "Modern Ulysses" much skilful pilotage among perilous rocks, but to an unbiassed mind it bore strong resemblance to ignominious flight. It were fitter for the English ship to anchor and defy.

Leaving metaphor aside, I entreat public opinion to consider the humanitarian and politic necessity of straightway recognising the South, and thereby settling the question of its becoming a nation, at once and for ever. I do not anticipate this step would produce war between the Federal and British Governments ; apart from its hazard with ourselves alone, such a war would have to be equally declared with France. But, if we are compelled to accept this alternative, I then maintain that we enter a fit, just, and even desirable war, substituting a cheap and advantageous encounter for a later far bloodier account ; that we contribute to the benefit of mankind in general ; and, finally, that we adhere to the first principle of national existence—self-interest. Not to

erect at whatsoever risk this bulwark for our safety, not to enter this prudent investment toward future peace, seems a dereliction of duty forming an unhappy climax to the flinching policy in vogue. Even granting that the South, by its own energy, endurance, and strength, appears likely to achieve independence, is it right that the solution of a problem so material to this country's welfare should depend upon what is at best a favourable chance? Moreover, is it politic, in the face of this prospect, to impregnate the early sensitive days of a young and powerful nation with feelings of umbrage, bitterness, and hatred? Already the alliance that spontaneously sprang to England we have diverted to France. On the other hand, if the unaided energies of the South miss developing a nation—for the North is strong, is “girded” to her task, and, it has been correctly remarked, while the South gains all the victories, the North reaps the substantial successes;—if, then, the South be subdued by her enemy, and in the course of a few relentless years be absorbed, I would ask what sort of a recovered Power the nations have then to face? A vast threatening Democracy, wielding immense armies, laden with boundless naval resource, and possessed of that fearful scourge entitled “a mission.” I would ask whether the antecedents of this prospective Power are such as to warrant any hope of forbearance, of courtesy, or of peaceful companionship? Especially I would ask what they promise to England—what these antecedents have been even when the commercial element prevailed? And I would, in conclusion, ask what sort of combination (already sketched in the ardent transatlantic brain) would be formed by the alliance of this monstrous democracy with an irresponsible autocrat of Russia?

These questions it behoves the present generation anxiously to consider. It is not sufficient to delegate them to the men of a past age, whose ideas are unable to realize a power more formidable than France, and whose sense of national greatness is therefore limited to an antique rivalry; neither may they be—without inevitable retribution—indolently shelved. It is easy and apparently safe to watch the battle afar; but when the awful responsibility of hushing it and securing its fruits to posterity as a legacy of weal or of woe rests with the spectator, continued contemplation may amount to a crime; certainly can only be excused by a constant exercise of judgment, by a scrupulous observation of every new or possible feature, and by a profound sense of the liability incurred by inaction. If

these essentials to the attitude England has assumed in the American crisis be now rigidly fulfilled, and there remains affirmation of her posture, I must regard myself as afflicted with some distorting idiosyncrasy which renders me unable to view the interests of my own country in their proper light ; but in such case I seek to be dispossessed by common sense, by sound logic, and, indispensably, by a *vital* patriotism. It is in no party spirit that I address this letter, and with a complete indifference to the personal prospects of either American belligerent. Not without deep regard for the community of nations, I write primarily from an English point of view, rendered keen, I am inclined to think, by much foreign intercourse in a maritime way, and by an early appreciation of American naval resource, combined with a perfect knowledge of that of the French, as well as spared for many years the political atmosphere that clings to Pall-mall. I trust this view will not be depreciated because held by

London, Nov. 9.

AN ENGLISH SEAMAN.

P.S. It may be as well to anticipate two forms of dissent my letter is likely to provoke. The case of the Trent will be adduced as exemplifying our readiness to vindicate the national honour when seriously molested by America ; and I shall be accused of mistaking American bluster for strength. I am quite aware the unlucky Trent business has supplied a new lease to our course of humility. But I would remark that England had no alternative on this occasion but that of the path she pursued. The affront was too glaring and too public to be meekly digested. In the same way, as there are men capable of pocketing an insult received in some deserted by-street or remote island, like San Juan, which in St. James's Street they would feel it incumbent to notice, so England was compelled to resent an outrage the notoriety of which forbade any compromise. The illustration may be unpleasant, but, alas, it is apt. The second allegation I meet by calling attention to the curious reversion European ideas receive when applied to American affairs. We are accustomed here to associate gasconade with pusillanimity and insignificance. Apply this to America, and we find unsurpassed braggarts to be the most fervent, indefatigable fighters. Let Manassas, Fort Donnelson, Shiloh, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Murfreesborough, Gettysburg, Chancellorsville, and Chattanooga all attest this—battles rendering diminutive those we have been accustomed to wage in Europe. The phenomenon fairly realized, this objection must cease.

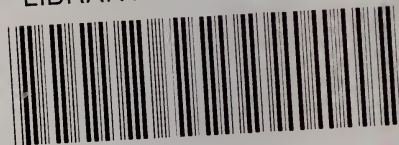
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